Introduction: advances in marketing research methods

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INTRODUCTION

As a discipline, marketing has matured after evolving for decades (Korai & Souiden, 2019; Leonidou et al., 2010; Witkowski, 2010). Marketing research has achieved high methodological sophistication and theoretical awareness, whereas it previously lacked both. It has currently reached a stage of active scholarship in theory development and empirical testing. The proliferation of academic journals is one of the dominant features of this evolution, as these journals have taken a leading position in respect of the various knowledge dissemination channels. These journals serve the following important functions: first, academic journals play a central role in knowledge production and, by dispersing knowledge, are key to its advancement in all disciplines. Second, they indicate the existence of a scientific domain, niche discipline, or school of thought (Nie et al., 2009). Third, marketing journals are the main reservoir of knowledge for researchers, students, and practitioners alike. Fourth, these journals are, in their own right, the focus of investigations, which Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015, p. 88) describe as “the scholarship on the scholarship” of marketing research.

Consequently, it is no surprise that the various studies investigating the marketing discipline’s intellectual structure fervently debate published research’s philosophical underpinnings, as well as the resulting theoretical and methodological approaches. In terms of these studies’ contributions to the field, Hanson and Grimmer (2007) reviewed articles published in three leading marketing journals between 1993 and 2002. They found that quantitative research dominated, with only very few scholars approaching their topics by means of qualitative approaches. Leonidou et al. (2010) assessed leading mainstream marketing journals’ contribution to the international marketing discipline. These scholars found that the investigated studies’ research designs became increasingly formalized and causal, as well as statistical and cross-sectional, suggesting quantitative approaches’ dominance. Davis and colleagues carried out an extensive content analysis

of articles published over a 20-year period (1990–2009) in the following five leading marketing journals: *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Marketing Science*. The researchers noted a “disturbing downward trend in methods diversity resulting from increasing reliance on two methods, experiments and modeling” (Davis et al., 2013, p. 1245). Research assessing the state of mixed-method research in marketing also concluded that studies prioritize quantitative rather than qualitative data (Harrison & Reilly, 2011). These researchers were concerned that, while marketing researchers recognize the benefits of mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches, the discipline does not demonstrate adequate knowledge of mixed-methods research’s good practices and procedures. It is not surprising, therefore, that several researchers have criticized positivistic paradigms’ over-dominance in marketing research, with some wondering whether the “marketing discipline [is] in trouble” (Korai & Souiden, 2019), whether “marketing research suffers from methods myopia” (Davis et al., 2013, p. 1245), and whether “current research approaches in marketing [are] leading us astray” (Gummesson, 2001, p. 27).

Such epistemological and methodological debates have informed this *Handbook of Research Methods for Marketing Management*, with the aforementioned researchers presenting the methodological issues in marketing research clearly. In addition, these researchers present specific methods and share their experiences of what works, what does not, and what the challenges and innovations are. Our handbook generates wider methodological debates by offering in one volume a wealth of research methods that marketing researchers have experienced. It comprises 18 chapters written by researchers from diverse educational and research backgrounds and geographical locations. The book is divided into four sections: quantitative research approaches; qualitative research approaches; mixed-method approaches; and other research issues. Each part of this handbook and its various chapters have their own internal logic; together the chapters serve as a “one-stop shop” for marketing scholars and practitioners interested in research. Given the differences between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research approaches, and their unequal use, we next provide a detailed explanation of how the authors of this handbook have used and applied them.

PART I QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Marketing practitioners rely enormously on marketing phenomena’s quantification for decision making (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2008).

However, while constructs such as sales performance, profitability, and financial performance can be measured objectively, others relating to consumer attitudes and behaviors, such as satisfaction and loyalty, are unobservable—and often referred to as latent variables (Borsboom et al., 2003). The latter cannot be measured objectively, yet their role in marketing decisions is conspicuous. Gupta and Zeithaml (2005) maintain that consumers' perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioral aspects are key to corporate success, and their measurement a prerequisite for enhanced marketing decision making. It is therefore not surprising that latent variables underlie much marketing research, and that their measurement has attracted scholars' attention. Appropriate measurement indicators that adequately represent such variables are fundamental for understanding consumer behaviors (Ambler, 2003). Consequently, the standard question that should be asked from a marketing manager's perspective is: Are the scales we use in marketing research truly valid and reliable?

In this volume's opening chapter, Noorjahan Banon Teeluckdharry, Viraiyan Teeroovengadam, and Ashley Seebaluck, using established theoretical and methodological guidelines, examine the paradigm for scale development. In addition, the authors examine scale evaluation, in which each phase includes several steps that the researcher must follow to ensure a valid and reliable measure of the latent variable. Further, the authors discuss the scale development process's reliability and validity issues by providing various illustrations to facilitate the readers' understanding.

The notion of causality is often used in marketing to infer relationships between variables. Causality has two distinct components, i.e., sufficiency and necessity (Abbott, 1974; Goertz, 2003). For example, in a relationship proposing that the variable X influences the variable Y, most researchers assume that X causes Y in terms of sufficiency. The second component of causality implies that X is necessary for Y; in other words, that there is no Y without X—although such hypotheses are rarely formulated and tested in marketing research. Consequently, researchers often confuse necessity with sufficiency, although the two terms are very dissimilar. However, necessity and sufficiency have rarely been discussed in the marketing literature. Jan Dul, Sven Hauff, and Zsófia Tóth address this literature gap in Chapter 2 by familiarizing the reader with necessary condition analysis (NCA). This technique, they argue, is a new and promising approach for identifying necessary conditions in empirical data. The authors provide the basic logic and steps required to conduct NCA. They then discuss opportunities to use it in marketing research, explaining the necessity logic before discussing the principles of NCA. The authors illustrate the application and the main functions of NCA software, using data from the Hogan Personality Inventory (Hogan & Hogan, 2007) in order to discuss

NCA as an effective method to apply in marketing research. Also, NCA may represent an interesting extension of other methods, such as partial least squares structural equation modeling (Richter et al., 2020).

Compositional data are those that only contain relative information and are a unique case in terms of marketing research. That is, these data “represent parts of some whole; therefore, they convey only relative information” (Pawlowsky-Glahn & Egozcue, 2006, p. 1). Such data are always positive and usually constrained to a constant sum. Values in compositional data are not free to range from $-\infty$ to $+\infty$ (as unconstrained variables are), which conditions the relationships between variables (Pawlowsky-Glahn & Egozcue, 2006). While compositional data are widely used in natural sciences, they are also relevant for the marketing discipline. Various marketing research questions are either related to the distribution of a whole (e.g., distribution, share, allocation, etc.) or to the relative importance (e.g., dominance, concentration, profile, etc.). However, compositional data cannot be analyzed by using conventional statistical techniques. In Chapter 3, Berta Ferrer-Rosell, Eva Martín-Fuentes, Marina Vives-Mestres, and Germà Coenders discuss the application of compositional data analysis in marketing research by using data from an e-word-of-mouth platform. The authors introduce compositional data’s peculiarities and draw on their own experiences to discuss compositional data analysis’s various steps.

The scientific-positivistic imperative, based on a deductive form of logic involving hypothesis testing, has traditionally informed marketing research (Gummesson, 2001). The analysis of quantitative marketing data has been enhanced due to advanced statistical software made possible by increasing computational power. In Chapter 4, John Williams argues that this trend, combined with researchers’ access to big data, has led to a de-emphasis of traditional frequentist statistics, specifically null-hypothesis significance testing (NHST), in favor of resampling-based methods, such as bootstrapping, cross-validation, and Empirical Bayesian methods. In this chapter, the author discusses modern data analysis as a paradigm for robustness in marketing research. He argues that the recent advances in data analysis due to increased computational power have led to many of the implicit assumptions underlying traditional statistical techniques being questioned. The author identifies current norms’ deficiencies and suggests a way to improve marketing research quality. He notes that some issues with the current norms include the replication crisis, problems with NHST, shrinkage, linearity, and additivity. He therefore proposes an alternative machine learning paradigm as a way to improve data analysis in marketing research.

Meta-analysis is an important technique for codifying knowledge in various fields. The term is defined as “the statistical analysis of a large

collection of results from individual studies for the purpose of integrating the findings. It connotes a rigorous alternative to the casual, narrative discussions of research studies which typify our attempt to make sense of the rapidly expanding research literature” (Glass, 1976, p. 3). A meta-analysis allows researchers to describe, identify, and analyze the variations in the results that previous studies of a specific relationship obtained (Gursoy et al., 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2020). Meta-analyses help identify and clarify theoretical and methodological contributions, and offer insights into avenues for future research that could advance a discipline. In Chapter 5, İlayda İpek and Nilay Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci contribute to our current understanding of meta-analysis by introducing this technique and explaining the key steps in its application. The authors subsequently apply this technique to study the relationship between export market orientation and export performance.

Much marketing research relies on emerging survey data, which are subsequently used to test causal relationships and make inferences. However, surveys have several inherent limitations that pose challenges for marketing research. One of the main limitations is total survey error (Eckman & de Leeuw, 2017), which is defined as “the accumulation of all errors that may arise in the design, collection, processing, and analysis of survey data. In this context, a survey error is defined as the deviation of a survey response from its underlying true value” (Biemer, 2010, p. 817). Survey errors could therefore pose challenges regarding research findings’ reliability and validity. An experimental design approach is a superior method for testing theories and examining causal relationships, which are known to increase research findings’ internal validity and, eventually, their robustness (Bradley & Sparks, 2012; Khan, 2011; Namasivayam, 2004). In Chapter 6, Sumeyra Duman discusses experimental design research in marketing. The author defines and explains the meaning of causality, the conditions required for causality, and the conditions required for experimental design research. Thereafter, she discusses the internal and external validity issues that experimental research requires. The author subsequently uses relevant examples from the literature to present experimental designs’ classification. She continues with a discussion of the ethical aspects of experimental research in marketing, drawing on her own experiences to discuss the advantages and challenges of experimental designs.

In their research and investigations, marketing researchers deal with complex and multidimensional issues. They are interested in analyzing the associations between various dependent and independent variables. Univariate and bivariate statistical techniques are limited when they are simultaneously applied to examine the relationships between different constructs, but yet leave some interactions unexplained (Crowley

& Fan, 1997). This omission requires researchers and scholars to use multivariate statistical analysis to solve complex research problems. Consequently, the use of multivariate statistical techniques in the social science literature has grown, enabling researchers to answer complex research questions and test multivariate models (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Nunkoo et al., 2013a; Weston & Gore, 2006). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM; Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2017) has specifically emerged as a popular multivariate statistical technique in marketing research (Hair et al., 2012, 2017; Henseler et al., 2009). In Chapter 7, Soujata Rughoobur-Seetah, Robin Nunkoo, and Viraiyan Teeroovengadum discuss the use of PLS-SEM applications in marketing. These authors present PLS-SEM's various benefits, such as the method's ability to deal with small sample sizes, formative constructs, and complex structural models that include first- and second-order factors. The authors also explain PLS-SEM's contributions to theory advancement in detail.

PART II QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

There is little doubt that positivism is the dominant paradigm in marketing research, as there are far fewer studies on interpretive approaches. Nevertheless, in the preceding discussion, we argue that studies using subjective approaches are on the rise. Our handbook and discussion do not aim to discredit either of the two methods or favor one approach over the other. Instead, we argue that both methods are legitimate and, in their own way, contribute to advancing marketing research. However, the paucity of qualitative data research provides an obvious research area in terms of using more interpretive approaches in marketing studies (Valtakoski, 2020). Although replication is an essential task in science, quantitative methods are often criticized for refining and testing what is already known, rather than developing new concepts and generating new theories. Quantitative methods also prevent researchers from using insight and intuition, especially when studying consumers' feelings, which require diverse forms of evidence and information. Several marketing phenomena, such as consumers' attitudes and behaviors, are formed in historical and social contexts that give meaning to marketing as a social process, and require the use of subjective research approaches.

In the following, we focus on case study research, which has made invaluable contributions to our understanding of marketing phenomena by allowing researchers to investigate real-life phenomena in their socio-economic and political contexts. Contrary to quantitative research, the contextual conditions are not delineated and/or controlled, but become

part of the investigation (Ridder, 2017). Despite case study research's methodological and theoretical progress, researchers sometimes understand it poorly and use it inappropriately (Harrison et al., 2017; Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2012). In Chapter 8, Edina Ajanovic and Beykan Çizel present a guide for the successful use of case studies in marketing management research. These authors start by defining case study research and discussing its use and its philosophical underpinnings. Thereafter, they explain how to define a case and select an appropriate design and theory, before explaining the various steps required when writing a case study. The authors provide useful guidelines to help novice case study researchers avoid methodological pitfalls.

Visual research methods have attracted the attention of many social science researchers (Hicks, 2018; Mannay, 2010; Pauwels & Mannay, 2019; Rose, 2014). Visuals such as photographs and virtual images have been used as research evidence, as stimuli to generate further data, and as a way of eliciting research participants' affects and reflections for decades (Dockett et al., 2017; Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Rose, 2016). The proliferation of research approaches through the use of visual materials is, we believe, due to visual images' importance in contemporary social and cultural practices (Rose, 2014). Visual research methods allow researchers to get "one step closer to the field" (Rohani et al., 2014, p. 300). In Chapter 9, Brian Garrod and Nika Balomenou explore the use of visual research methods in marketing. These authors argue that visual materials—such as artworks, photographs, and film—have often been considered inferior to the more familiar figures, words, and texts associated with the established social research methods canon. In this context, the authors review the use of visual methods across the social sciences, focusing particularly on the use of volunteer-employed photography (VEP). In the opening paragraphs of the chapter, the authors explain visual research methods by first delving into their history. This is followed by a discussion of their reliability, validity, intent, and timing issues. Thereafter, the authors explain a visual research method, using VEP in the context of a case study.

Although the positivistic paradigm has traditionally dominated marketing research, post-positivist approaches are becoming an alternative research approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Svensson, 2007). Marketing researchers are increasingly using phenomenology to study consumer experiences. Phenomenology distinguishes itself from other scientific forms of inquiry through its emphasis on subjective experiences (Cohen, 1979; Li, 2000; Goolaup et al., 2018). Scholars regard phenomenology as the study of essence: the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness. The literature, dating back as far as the 1980s, has emphasized phenomenology's benefits for marketing research (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011;

Houston et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 1989; Wilson, 2012). In Chapter 10, Mine Inanc and Metin Kozak join the debate on phenomenology by discussing its prospects and challenges in respect of marketing research. With qualitative methods being increasingly emphasized as an alternative method for understanding the cause of consumer behavior in its natural settings, the authors discuss the benefits and challenges of phenomenology, as well as its applications in marketing research. They subsequently outline the procedures that a phenomenological study should follow.

Technological advancements have provided several opportunities for scholars to improve the ways they conduct research and collect data. For example, increased smartphone usage has led to the emergence of a new research method known as mobile ethnography. Unlike traditional ethnographic research, which involves face-to-face data collection, mobile ethnography employs technology-based devices, such as smartphones (Muskat et al., 2018; Rebernik et al., 2020; Stickdorn et al., 2014). In Chapter 11, Birgit Bosio, Katharina Rainer, and Marc Stickdorn present mobile ethnography as an emerging research approach that integrates customers as active researchers with mobile devices. In this chapter, the authors discuss the benefits of using mobile ethnography for marketing research. They argue that mobile ethnography enables researchers to get closer to customers through a better understanding of the problems and challenges they face when using their product or service. The chapter outlines a typical research process, and discusses this emerging method's potentials and challenges.

PART III MIXED-METHOD APPROACHES

Quantitative and qualitative approaches have their specific advantages as well as drawbacks, which are all well documented. Their drawbacks are not a problem per se; but the ways researchers have positioned these approaches are. For example, Gummesson (2001) argues that positivist researchers claim that quantitative approaches “are better, even the only science; and their far too successful warfare to implant that claim in the academic system and acquire disproportionate ‘market share’ [is] close to monopoly” (p. 28). This positioning has unfortunately led to a divide between qualitative and quantitative researchers, who view themselves as competing with one another (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). This divide has led to self-proclaimed purists; that is, researchers restricting themselves to either qualitative or quantitative approaches. However, mono-method study designs are critiqued as being the biggest threat to social science research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

A robust research design is one that adopts a mixed-method approach (Nunkoo et al., 2013b). Mixed-methods research is where a researcher “combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123). The literature provides a range of well-rehearsed arguments about the advantages of mixing methods, which include validating data or analysis and providing a fuller picture of the phenomenon (Bryman, 2004; Davies, 2003; Harrison & Reilly, 2011; Kowalczyk, 2018; McGoldrick & Liu, 2017; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Consumers’ social experiences and lived realities—which are multidimensional by nature rather than comprising a unique, “absolute” truth—influence consumer behaviors. Studying these experiences and realities as a single dimension could be inadequate and limit our understanding of marketing phenomena. Methodology and methods are needed that open researchers’ perspectives to the multidimensional nature of social experiences and lived realities. Mixing methods offers the potential to explore new dimensions in marketing research that allow researchers and scholars to think differently and “outside the box.” Integrating tools of qualitative and quantitative approaches enables fact verification and the investigation of complex and multidimensional reality. This can be achieved if mixed-method approaches are viewed multidimensionally instead of simply in qualitative–quantitative terms (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

In Chapter 12, Rachel Hay adopts a mixed-methods approach in the context of agricultural marketing research. Her approach involves face-to-face interviews, followed by an online survey to determine the extent to which rural women use technology and to establish their views of the role they play in managing emerging livestock management tools. A media campaign supported the methodology, which aimed to build the participants’ trust in the researchers. The chapter outlines the methodological steps involving the sampling strategy, data collection, validity, reliability, and data analysis. The author applies an emic approach to her research of participants with unique personalities, such as farmers. The author’s contribution lies in her application of a mixed-methods approach to research by involving participants who are difficult to reach.

Emotions influence consumer behaviors; therefore their role in marketing cannot be disputed, and is well discussed in the literature (Addis et al., 2018; Babin et al., 1998; Bagozzi et al., 1999; Gaur et al., 2014; Hosany et al., 2020; Huang, 2001). Emotions in the marketing literature are “mental states of readiness that arise from appraisals of events or one’s own thoughts” (Bagozzi et al., 1999, p. 184). The measurement

of emotions has been thoroughly debated. In Chapter 13, Arghavan Hadinejad, Noel Scott, Anna Kralj, and Brent Moyle apply multi-methods to measure emotion in tourism marketing. These authors argue that, while most studies on tourism use self-reported measures to capture individuals' emotions, this approach cannot capture moment-to-moment emotions, and is therefore unsuitable for a continuous measurement of emotions in real time. Self-report surveys have been criticized for allowing retrospective reflection, which might not reflect participants' actual emotions. In response to such criticism, the contributors apply a multi-method approach involving FaceReader™, skin conductance, self-report surveys, and post hoc interviews to capture individuals' emotional responses (emotional arousal and valence in particular) to a promotional video of a destination in Switzerland.

While a scale development process can be based solely on a quantitative approach, a mixed-methods approach to generate scale items has more recently also gained popularity in the literature (Harrison, 2013). Researchers have advocated a mixed-method approach to developing reliable instruments, including the generation and validation of measurement items since the early 2000 (Collins et al., 2006). Researchers such as Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) recommend a sequential mixed-methods approach to scale development that includes: a qualitative phase to define the constructs; an instrument development phase that includes item generation and revision; and a quantitative phase to test the instrument and confirm the measurement items. In Chapter 14, Shabanaz Baboo adopts a mixed-method approach to develop a social media attachment scale. Her approach involves in-depth interviews with social media users, from which she generated the scale items and refined these on the basis of an expert panel's feedback. Following this process, she applies an exploratory factor analysis to ensure the scales' unidimensionality, and a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the scale items by using data collected from two different surveys. She demonstrates the benefits of using a mixed-method approach to develop valid and reliable scale items.

PART IV OTHER ISSUES IN MARKETING RESEARCH

The final part of this handbook deals with other issues that are relevant for marketing researchers. In Chapter 15, D. Anthony Miles illustrates and discusses forensic marketing—a new investigative research model based on marketing dynamics. The discussion includes the following forensic science model and evidence framework: industry position and competitors

evidence; law and policy evidence; pricing and product line evidence; brand offering evidence; and distribution channels evidence. The author also presents the forensic marketing competencies and abilities that investigators require. His discussions contribute to the ongoing, but limited, debate on the usefulness of forensic marketing (Anderson et al., 2008; Bussière, 2005; Volkov & Laing, 2015).

In Chapter 16, Marie Valerie Uppiah and Roopanand Mahadew explore the application of legal theories and legal research methods to marketing research, and provide an overview of the different legal theories and legal research methods that can be used throughout a marketing research process. They argue that such a multidisciplinary approach adds value to the outcome of research by providing a multifaceted way of analyzing and interpreting data. They delve into legal theories, paying specific attention to natural law theory. In Chapter 17, these contributors further the debate by assessing the legal implications and parameters of marketing research. They discuss the legal implications of data collection and privacy, the use and dissemination of information, misleading and illegal advertisement, and pricing strategies, using appropriate sections of the law to support their arguments.

Research ethics have for long attracted the attention of researchers (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2002; Crawford, 1970; Gajjar, 2013; Wester, 2011). In the final chapter, Mridula Gungaphul and Mehrnaz Boolaky discuss ethical considerations in marketing research. After situating the role of ethics in marketing research, the authors discuss its historical evolution. They examine the importance of upholding ethical standards throughout the marketing research process, taking marketing researchers, clients, respondents, and the public into consideration. The authors also highlight some of the innovative marketing research techniques and ethical issues related to these techniques. They provide researchers and students writing dissertations with practical recommendations and guidelines on ethical issues in marketing research.

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